Creating Community Through Great Music 2025-2026

Chamber Music Amici

Artwork by Hannah Dean
2025-2026 Season Artist

Echoes of Heritage:

Jewish Melodies in Classical Music

Richard E. Wildish
Community Theater

Monday, October 27th
7:30 p.m.

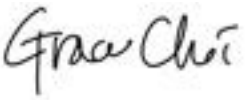
Welcome!

Today's program invites us on a journey through sound and story—where music reflects heritage and builds bridges between cultures. Though not all of the composers in the program are Jewish, each work draws inspiration from Jewish melodies and traditions, reminding us of how music transcends boundaries.

From Prokofiev's witty *Overture on Hebrew Themes* to Laks' rarely heard *Piano Quintet*, Bruch's heartfelt *Kol Nidrei,* and Zemlinsky's lyrical *Trio*, these pieces invite us to listen with curiosity and connection.

By reviving both neglected and beloved masterpieces, we honor tradition while discovering fresh perspectives. Music here becomes both commemoration and celebration—a chance to reflect, connect, and carry heritage forward.

May today's performance deepen your appreciation of music and remind us of the enduring human spirit expressed through music.



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Join us for treats after the concert on stage.

Echoes of Heritage:
Jewish Melodies in Classical Music

Overture on Hebrew Themes, Op. 34 — **Sergei Prokofiev**

Eunhye Grace Choi, piano; Tomás Cotik, violin; Arnaud Ghillebaert, viola; Wonkak Kim, clarinet; Lillie Manis, violin; Steven Pologe, cello

Kol Nidrei for Cello and Piano, Op. 47 — **Max Bruch**

Eunhye Grace Choi, piano; Steven Pologe, cello

Trio in D Minor for Clarinet, Cello, and Piano, Op. 3 — **Alexander von Zemlinsky**

I. Allegro ma non troppo
II. Andante
III. Allegro

Eunhye Grace Choi, piano; Wonkak Kim, clarinet; Steven Pologe, cello

Piano Quintet on Popular Polish Themes — **Simon Laks**

I. Allegro quasi presto
II. Lento sostenuto
III. Vivace non troppo
IV. Allegro moderato ma deciso

Eunhye Grace Choi, piano; Tomás Cotik, violin; Arnaud Ghillebaert, viola; Lillie Manis, violin; Steven Pologe, cello

Program Notes

by Dr. Terry McQuilkin

Sergei Prokofiev (1891–1953): Overture on Hebrew Themes, op. 34

In the spring of 1918, Sergei Prokofiev made up his mind to leave revolutionary Russia (although temporarily, he thought). After a long journey aboard trains and ships (crossing Siberia, the Pacific Ocean, and North America), he arrived in New York City that September.

About a year later, Prokofiev attended a concert in Carnegie Hall given by Zimro, a group of Jewish musicians who had also journeyed from Russia to New York. The ensemble was led by clarinetist Simeon Bellison, and included a pianist and a string quartet. Zimro had a varied repertoire, with music scored for various combinations of instruments, but they needed a piece that included the entire sextet. Prokofiev's "Overture on Hebrew Themes" met that need.

There are conflicting accounts of what prompted Prokofiev to write the piece. In his autobiography, the composer asserts that the members of Zimro "asked me to write an overture for a sextet, and gave me a notebook of Jewish themes." Simeon Bellison, in his memoirs, recalled that it was Prokofiev who approached the members of Zimro after the Carnegie Hall concert and offered to write a piece for them.

In any event, Prokofiev seems to have composed the work quickly. After improvising on some of the themes in the notebook one evening, he sketched out the entire work the next day, then polished it over the next ten days. Zimro premiered the work in New York on January 26, 1920.

The nine-minute work, in sonata form, is built around two melodies. The clarinet introduces the first – a Klezmer circle dance called a Freilachs. The cello introduces the second tune, a wedding song, "Zayt Gezunterheyt, meine lieber Eltern" ("Farewell my dear parents).

Max Bruch (1838–1920): Kol Nidrei, op. 47

In July 1880, Max Bruch spent a fortnight at Igeler Hof, a retreat in Germany, in the hills near Cologne. It was during this time that he composed his "Kol Nidrei" for cello and orchestra. Bruch had already produced successful works for violin and orchestra (two concertos, the Scottish

Fantasy and a romance), and cellist Robert Hausmann had been imploring him to write a piece featuring his instrument.

Bruch based the first part of the work, in D minor, on a chant melody, "Kol Nidrei" ("All vows"), a prayer of atonement that is to be recited on the eve of Yom Kippur, the holiest day on the Jewish calendar. The second section, in D major, uses a melody found in an 1815 collection called "Hebrew Melodies," with texts by Lord Byron and music by Jewish composer Isaac Nathan. The hymn is titled, "Oh Weep for Those that Wept on Babel's Stream."

After the full orchestra version and piano-reduction scores were published in 1881, "Kol Nidrei" gained widespread popularity not only among cellists, but also among violinists and violists. It remains one of only three of the composer's works (along with the First Violin Concerto and the Scottish Fantasy) to appear frequently on orchestral programs.

Alexander Zemlinsky (1871–1942): Trio in D minor for clarinet, cello and piano, Op. 3

The son of parents with mixed Jewish and Muslim heritage, Alexander Zemlinsky was born in Vienna and studied at the Vienna Conservatory, graduating in 1892.

In Vienna, Zemlinsky became active in the *Tonkünstlerverein*, which was established in 1885 to support Viennese musicians and composers. In 1896, the organization held a contest for chamber compositions that featured one or more wind instruments, and Zemlinsky's Trio for Clarinet, Cello and Piano was awarded third place. Johannes Brahms was one of the judges, and, after hearing the work in performance in December, he recommended to his friend Fritz Simrock that the work be published.

Zemlinsky had long admired the music of Brahms, and one can find several "Brahmsian" traits in the Trio: the use of classical forms, organic development of concise musical ideas, and contrapuntal textures. Some of the musical motives seem to have been plucked from Brahms's scores, yet several traits distinguish Zemlinsky's music from that of the older composer. Zemlinsky's melodies are more richly garnished with chromatic pitches, his counterpoint is less dense, and his rhythms are simpler.

The opening sonata-form movement, marked Allegro ma non troppo, is as long as the other two movements combined. In the first measure, the clarinet and cello introduce the main theme: a yearning gesture built on the first three notes of the D minor scale. That idea turns out to be the grist for nearly all of the work's

melodic content. The exposition section closes with a serene statement of the main theme – this time in A major – before the whole exposition is repeated. Myriad key areas are traversed in the development, and in the recapitulation, the secondary thematic material is developed more than before.

The Adagio in D major is in three-part form, and the piano introduces the chromatically inflected main theme. In bar 13, the clarinet and cello enter, turning that theme into a duet, with the piano contributing additional counterpoint. The piano's soft tremolos usher in a contrasting section, in F minor, where the clarinet and cello trade quasi-improvisatory rhapsodic gestures, reminiscent of the middle section of Brahms's Clarinet Quintet.

After a short fermata, the piano plays an arpeggiated accompaniment line (with a dynamic level of ppp), over which the clarinet reprises the opening D minor material.

The finale is a rondo anchored around a florid refrain in D minor. Contrasting themes are introduced then combined with the refrain theme. A development ensues while the tonality careens from key to key. Near the end, the first movement's main theme returns, broadly and assertively.

Simon Laks (1901–1983): Piano Quintet on Popular Polish Themes

Simon (Szymon) Laks was born in Warsaw and studied mathematics at Vilnius University and music composition and conducting at the Warsaw Academy of Music. Around 1926, he moved to Paris where he studied at the Paris Conservatory and became associated with the "Association des Jeunes musiciens polonais," which included other Polish composers living in France.

During the 1920s and 1930s, a number of his works, including his second string quartet and a wind quintet, earned him awards, but many of his works from this time are lost.

Following the Nazi occupation of France during the Second World War, Laks was arrested in May 1941 on account of his Jewish heritage, and fourteen months later he was sent to Auschwitz Birkenau. Because of his broad experience as a musician, Laks was put to work as a violinist, music copyist and eventually the conductor of the camp orchestra. His status as a musician-prisoner spared him the hard labor and almost certain death that most of his fellow inmates suffered.

Following his release, Laks settled in Paris and returned to composing,

producing a number of songs and instrumental works. His postwar compositional output was modest, however, as he put much of his energy into writing and translating (he was fluent in five languages). In his 1948 memoir, *Musique d'un autre monde* (*Music of Another World*), he related his experiences as a prisoner in Auschwitz.

Laks composed his "Piano Quintet on Popular Polish Themes" in 1967, but the work's genesis dates back to 1945. The first work that Laks produced following his liberation from the Nazi concentration camp was his String Quartet No. 3 ("on Popular Polish Motifs"). When Laks rescored the work for piano quintet, he used a different melody for the first movement's second theme. However, for the remaining three movements, the thematic content and the structure of the two versions are identical.

Stylistically, the work reflects the "´École de Paris" aesthetic associated with émigré composers living in Paris during the interwar period; these composers gravitated toward the neoclassical style associated with the members of "Les Six."

The first movement, marked Allegro quasi presto, has the feel of an *oberek*, a fast Polish dance in 3/4 time. The slow, hymn-like second movement features two Polish melodies; the second one is a lugubrious soldier's song whose lyrics include the line, "a soldier is near starvation, a cap on his head," which may be a subtle reference to a cruel ritual of prisoners being forced to doff and don their caps in Auschwitz. The energetic third movement employs dance tunes from different regions. In the first of these, the meter alternates between 5/8 and 3/4 time. The ebullient final movement's main theme is a song associated with a welcoming-of-spring ritual, a tune still well known in Poland.

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We extend our heartfelt thanks to you, our audience, for supporting live chamber music and for being a part of today's program.

This season is dedicated to
Sharon Johnson Schuman (1946-2025)
Co-Founder of Chamber Music Amici

Sharon was a visionary musician, educator, and community leader whose joyful spirit and fearless creativity helped shape the very heart of Amici. Her passion for making chamber music accessible, welcoming, and deeply personal transformed the concert experience for audiences of all ages.

Sharon touched countless lives through her performances, mentorship, and civic engagement. Chamber Music Amici honors her extraordinary legacy and the enduring community she helped to build. Sharon's music lives on in all of us.

Musicians

Eunhye Grace Choi, piano

Korean pianist Eunhye Grace Choi has been praised for her “nice touch and excellent technique” (American Record Guide) and “meticulous attention to detail” (Fanfare). Choi has recorded extensively for Naxos, MSR, Albany, Emeritus, and Origin Classical. As a sought after collaborative pianist and chamber musician, Choi regularly performs with musicians and soloists from the major symphony orchestras, including Cleveland, Philadelphia, Dallas, Chicago, Cincinnati, St. Paul, and San Francisco Symphony as well as many of the world’s most prestigious music institutions and conservatories. Dr. Choi served as Collaborative Piano Faculty for six years at Eastern Music Festival. She has also served as music faculty and collaborative pianist at Tennessee Tech University (2013–2017). Choi is Artistic Director of Chamber Music Amici as well as The Classical on Broadway Series in Eugene, Oregon.

Tomás Cotik, violin

Tomás is internationally recognized as a soloist, chamber musician, and professor. A highly sought-after recording artist, he has released 20 albums for Naxos and Centaur Records, accumulating over 6 million streams. Fanfare Magazine praises him, writing: “Cotik never indulges in violinistic brilliance at the expense of music, but he sounds consistently brilliant nevertheless.” Tomás’ thoughtful research on historical performance and in-depth interpretations have repeatedly earned him favorable comparisons to some of the world’s most famous musicians. As Professor of Violin at Portland State University, Tomás has received numerous prestigious awards, including First Prize in The American Prize for String Performance and the Dean’s Council Award for Research. His discography includes complete works by Bach, Telemann, Mozart, and Schubert, as well as his own arrangements of music by his countryman Astor Piazzolla.

Arnaud Ghillebaert, viola

Arnaud Ghillebaert has played under the baton of great conductors such as Sir Colin Davis and Herbert Blomstedt and in the following orchestras: the London Symphony Orchestra, the Academy of Saint Martin in the Fields, the Bournemouth Symphony, and the Scottish Opera. An avid chamber musician, he performed at the Louis Moreau Institute in New Orleans and in the “Starry Nights” music series at the Staller Center for the Arts (NY) alongside Eugene Drucker (Emerson String Quartet) and Nick Cords (Silkroad Ensemble). He is a founding member of the Elsewhere Ensemble, a chamber group mixing music and spoken word/theater. He completed his Doctorate in viola and violin performance at Stony Brook University and is the current University of Oregon viola instructor.

Wonkak Kim, clarinet

Korean clarinetist Wonkak Kim has captivated audiences around the world with his “excellent breath control” (The Washington Post) and “exuberant musicianship” (Fanfare). Kim appeared as a soloist and chamber musician in major venues and festivals throughout North and South Americas, Asia and Europe, including numerous performances at NYC’s Carnegie Hall. A Naxos Recording Artist, he has garnered international acclaim through his extensive discography. Gulfstream, a collection of new American chamber music, received many distinctions, including “Music US Choice” (BBC Music Magazine). Dr. Kim is Associate Professor of Clarinet at the University of Oregon, where he received the 2020 Presidential Fellowship in Humanistic Studies. He is a Buffet Crampon, Vandoren and Silverstein Performing Artist and is regularly invited as guest clinician at world learning institutions, including the Juilliard, Yale, and Manhattan School of Music.

Lillie Manis, violin

Widely recognized for her work as a Suzuki educator, Lillie is currently completing her doctorate at Teachers College, Columbia University, where her research focuses on studio teachers’ holistic strategies for cultivating expressive performance in young violinists. From 2009-2020, she was a faculty member at the University of Oregon School of Music and Dance, where she mentored graduate violin and viola pedagogy students and served as the Assistant Director of the Community Music Institute.Active as a clinician, masterclass presenter, adjudicator, and conference presenter at both the regional and national levels, she enjoys performing chamber music alongside some of the Northwest’s finest players, and recently joined the editorial committee of the American String Teacher.

Steven Pologe, cello

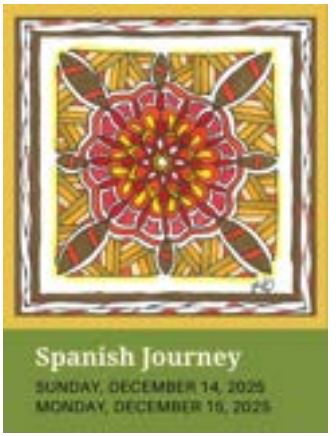
Steven Pologe has performed throughout the United States and in Italy, Sweden, Taiwan, South Korea, Thailand, New Zealand, and Canada. His recordings include All That Jazz and quartets by William Grant Still with the Oregon String Quartet, as well as works by Jon Deak and Lev Abeliovich. He is Professor of Cello at the University of Oregon and has appeared with the Oregon Bach Festival, Aspen Music Festival, and more. In 2006, he received a grant from the National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences to support research on string player movement. He was formerly principal cellist with the Honolulu Symphony.

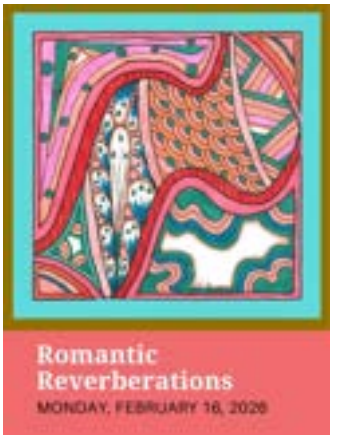
The 2025-2026 season is here!

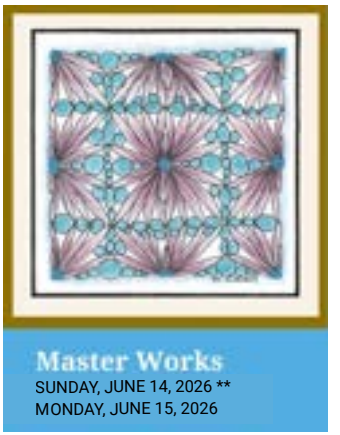
Thank you for joining us for this performance. Your presence and enthusiasm make live music possible — and meaningful.

Join us for our next concert, Spanish Journey. Performances are on Sunday, December 14 at 3:00 p.m. and Monday, December 15 at 7:30 p.m.

Joaquín Turina • Piano Trio No. 2, Op. 76
Sergei Prokofiev • Sonata for Two Violins in C Major, Op. 56
Isaac Albéniz • Selections from Suite Española, Op. 47 for String Quartet
Enrique Granados • Piano Quintet in G Minor, Op. 49







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